

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) returned this week from an official Congressional fact-finding mission to the U.S.-Mexico border. Hall and two other Members of Congress flew on Monday to Tucson, Arizona and then traveled to the Port of Entry in Nogales, Arizona to meet with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents and see first-hand the efforts to secure the U.S. border.

"A country is fundamentally defined by its borders," said Hall. "It's vital to national security that we are able to regulate our borders effectively and control the flow of illegal drugs, agricultural products, manufactured goods and people."

Hall's fact-finding mission in Arizona with U.S. Reps. Michael Arcuri (D-NY24) and Bruce Braley (D-IA01) included:

- A briefing and tour of the Nogales Point of Entry's border crossing;
- A tour of the Nogales Border Patrol Station and demonstration of the station's technology, evidence and processing capabilities;
- A tour of the Border Area's physical border fence as well as the 28 miles of virtual fencing made up of video surveillance and sensor technology;
- A briefing and tour of the temporary checkpoint on Interstate-19 (a second layer of enforcement 30 miles in from the border); and
- A tour of the Tucson Area Sector Headquarters. Hall met with Customs and Border Patrol officials, who are employees of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to discuss in detail the on-the ground efforts to detect and prevent drug, counterfeit products, and currency smuggling as well as apprehend illegal border crossings.

"The effort to secure our borders is a multi-faceted, multi-layered operation run by dedicated and resourceful professionals," he said. "Border security is about much more than just illegal immigration. Secure borders protect against an influx of hundreds of thousands of pounds of illegal drugs, possibly hazardous counterfeit clothing and products from China, dangerous pests that can decimate U.S. crops, and potential terrorist weapons."

Since he came to Congress in January 2007, Hall has voted for funding to hire 3,000 additional border agents and for authorization to complete a new, 700-mile long border fence that incorporates advanced technology. Hall also voted for \$1 billion for the Secure Border Initiative. Hall traveled to the border to hear and see directly what is working and what still needs to be done to improve border security.

"I'm going to take everything I learned to work in Congress for more effective border security policies," he said. "What I heard from the Department of Homeland Security agents is that for \$5 billion over ten years, which is less than we are spending in Iraq every two weeks, we could bring the security of all of America's ports and borders up to today's highest standards. That should be a high priority for the next Administration and Congress."

In 2007 Nogales processed 18 million border crossings. 27,000 people were turned back or apprehended for reasons ranging from fake documents to criminal records. A total of 40 people were found to be "persons of interest" to the FBI. Automobiles, electronics and produce are the most common articles of commerce. A significant amount of border traffic is Mexican nationals crossing to the U.S. for shopping, and U.S. citizens crossing to Mexico for medical care and prescription drugs, according to the Customs briefers.

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